

Joint Cargo Aircraft (JCA)

What is it?

The C-27J JCA is a medium lift cargo airplane capable of carrying 16,000 pounds (with a future upgrade to 18,000 pounds) of cargo both inter and Intra Theater to the forward operating base (FOB). Other capabilities include adverse weather, night vision compatible, heads up display, airdrops, medical transport, and short field landing and takeoff ability.

What has Army Aviation done?

The Army Chief of Staff (CSA) decided that the aircraft and all funding for it be given to the Air Force. This decision was based on the differences of roles and missions that each service provides to our Nation. After the CSA informed the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) of this decision the OSD published a requirements memorandum decision (RMD) numbered 802. This memorandum went beyond just the C-27J aircraft and affected the C-23 and to some extent the C-12. The Army, with TCM-Lift as the lead, developed a concept of employment (CONEMP) with the Air Force Mobility Command (AMC) on how the Air Force will employ the C-27J to support the Army. The intent was to cover the gap left by the move of the C-27J. The Air Force C-27J squadron will be Tactical Control (TACON) to the Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) or the senior Army Aviation authority (no lower than a lieutenant colonel) to provide direct support of time-sensitive and mission-critical movement of cargo. The squadron will be task utilized and briefed the same as any other Army Aviation unit under the CAB.

What continued efforts does Army Aviation have planned for the future?

The future of the C-27J is to rapidly field and deploy the aircraft and its crews as they become available for deployment. The limiting factor for the next few years will be class throughput for training both pilots and loadmasters and the production of new aircraft. The Army Chief of Staff has directed that all roles and missions dealing with the movement of cargo via fixed-wing aircraft be handled by the Air Force, therefore a plan is being developed to limit or divest the remaining cargo carrying capability of Army fixed-wing aviation. The Air Force is on board to support the Army so no future gap exists by utilizing a "Platform Neutral" concept. In layman term's, they will support the Army with whatever asset they deem appropriate, i.e., C-130, C-27J, etc., in the previously mentioned CAB structure.

Why is this important to the Army and Army Aviation?

By transferring the C-27J from the Army and Army Aviation and developing a plan to limit and/or divest the remaining cargo assets, the Army can save money in both procurement and operating costs that can go to other programs deemed in-line with Army roles and missions. Army Aviation has the opportunity to employ true joint operations with the embedding of the Air Force C-27J unit into an Army Aviation unit. This will be a continual relationship and foster a cohesive support mechanism to the ground commander, utilizing all available aviation assets to "get the job done." As events have shown, the ability to move what needs to be moved, where it needs to be, in a timely manner, are essential. It doesn't matter if we are talking about war, natural disasters, humanitarian relief or homeland security. An integrated aviation lift capability will go a long way in providing the necessary tools to the commander, Army Aviation, and the United States Army.

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